

329. Maximizing your chances

By Ron Klinger

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

North
♠ A8752
♥ 874
♦ 3
♣ K962

South
♠ 93
♥ AKJ106
♦ AK10
♣ 753

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

(a) Do you agree with North's 4♥ bid?

(b) West leads the ♠10. Plan the play?

(a) With the singleton diamond and an 8-loser hand, North looks too strong for just a raise to 3♥. With a strong raise, North could bid 2♠, but the hand does not look good enough for a strong raise to 3♥. The jump to 4♥ is a pre-emptive raise and denies the values for a strong raise.

Neither of the North players in the [LAVAZZA](#) vs [SCHWARTZ](#) semi-final in the 2017 Spingold (USA Knockout Open Teams) agreed with that assessment and after all, they are in the semi-final of a major event.

West	North	East	South
<i>Bianchedi</i>	<i>Danatov</i>	<i>Madala</i>	<i>Stamatov</i>
<i>Gold</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>M. Bell</i>	<i>Duboin</i>
		1♠	2♥
Pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3♠ ⁽²⁾
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

(1) Good raise to 3♥

(2) Stopper ask for 3NT

Although North had a spade stopper, the singleton diamond persuaded North to prefer 4♥. West leads the ♠10. As that figures to be a singleton, you naturally take the ♠A. What next?

How many points do you and dummy have? Answer: 22. The opponents have 18. *Where will most of those points be?* With East for the opening bid.

How many losers do you have? One spade loser, maybe one heart loser, a diamond loser, but you can ruff the ♦10 in dummy, so no worries there and two losers for certain in clubs and maybe three. You need to reduce your losers to three at most. *What losers must you eliminate?* You can do nothing about the spade loser and you are sure to have two club losers. That means you have to avoid losing a heart and the ♣K must become a trick. That will give you 1 spade, 5 hearts, 2 diamonds, a diamond ruff and the ♣K.

How can you make the ♣K into a winner? Either play for the ♣A with West or for the ♣A to be singleton or doubleton with East. *Which is more likely?* Although most of the HCP are with East, there are enough points possible with West to include the ♣A. The ♣A singleton with East is very unlikely (and you can check for that). It is more likely that West has the ♣A than East having specifically ♣A-x. *If West does have the ♣A, what follows from that?* The opponents have 18 HCP, you can place 12+ with East for the opening bid. If West has the ♣A, then while West could just have the ♥Q as well, it is far more likely that East has the ♥Q. That should give you enough information to plan your play after taking the ♠A. *What trap must you avoid? (Answer later)*

Board 23: Dealer East : Both vulnerable

	North	
	♠ A8752	
	♥ 874	
	♦ 3	
	♣ K962	
West		East
♠ 10		♠ KQJ64
♥ 53		♥ Q92
♦ Q976542		♦ J8
♣ A84		♣ QJ10
	South	
	♠ 93	
	♥ AKJ106	
	♦ AK10	
	♣ 753	

Both declarers, Stamatov and Duboin, effectively took the same line. They won the ♠10 lead with the ♠A, played the ♥4 to the ♥A (in case the ♥Q was singleton), cashed the ♦A and ruffed the ♦10 in dummy. Then came the ♥8: nine – ten – five, followed by the ♥K, ♦K, discarding a club, and the ♣3: four – nine (in case East had the ♣A singleton) – ten. East cashed the ♠Q. Both Souths ruffed the next spade and played a club: eight – king – jack and had ten tricks, +620, no swing.

If the ♣K had lost to the ♣A, you just accept that the contract did not make, even though you adopted the best play in theory. That final question: *What trap must you avoid?* After ♠A, ♥4: two – ace – three, the right play is ♦A and diamond ruff. You should not play ♦A, ♦K and then the ♦10, ruffed. East over-ruffs dummy and now you lose a spade, a heart and two clubs. Of course, it is unlucky to find East with a doubleton diamond, but there is no need to take even that slight risk.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♦	Dble	3♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass
3♦	4♣	Pass	Pass
			?

(1) 4+ diamonds, 6-9 points

What would you do now as West with

♠ Q1098
 ♥ AQ8
 ♦ AQ743
 ♣ 10

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.